

Getting Up When You're Knocked Down, Part 2 - 1 Corinthians 4:2 – July 27th, 2014

- Today's teaching will be part two of a series I've titled, "Getting Up When You're Knocked Down."
- I chose this title because the Apostle Paul is a great example when it comes to someone getting back up every time they're knocked down.
- From multiple shipwrecks to numerous beatings and everything in between, Paul not only survived, he actually even thrived in spite of it all.

- The question becomes, what was Paul's secret? What was it about him that enabled him, to keep getting back up, and keep pressing on?
- I would submit that the answer to this question is woven into the fabric of the chapter that we have before us here in first Corinthians four.
- We saw the first one in verse one, which is of paramount importance as it relates to our understanding the other practical ways that follow.

1. Maintain a servant's humility (Verse 1)

- Here Paul says first and foremost men should always regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.
- What Paul is saying here is that we should be regarded and known by others for our humility as servants, like the under rowers in that day.
- This because, the under rowers had the lowest position on the ship, and as such, it would require an attitude of humility in order to survive.

2. Remain faithful as a steward (Verse 2)

- v2 Paul takes it a step further and says it also requires that those who have been given a trust as servants, must prove that they are faithful.
- In other words, what comes packaged with one possessing the humility of a servant is the understanding of what it means to be a steward.
- A steward, or manager, if you prefer, owns nothing, but is entrusted by the owner of everything, which requires that they be proven faithful.

- In order to better understand what Paul's point is, we need to first notice what it's not, such that, we need to know what Paul is not saying.
- Notice Paul doesn't say that those who have been given a trust must prove themselves successful; rather, they prove themselves faithful.
- You'll forgive the silly illustration, but when on that day we enter glory Jesus will not say, "Well done good and successful servant, enter in."

- Here's where I'm going with all of this, if the litmus test is that of my being successful as opposed to my being faithful then I'm in big trouble.
- Actually, I'm in good company with the likes of the prophet Jeremiah, who by any stretch of the imagination was faithful, but not successful.
- Conversely, the prophet Jonah who by any stretch of the imagination was anything but faithful yet he could certainly be deemed successful.

- The reason I point out this striking contrast is because Jeremiah kept getting back up and pressing on in spite of not having one salvation.
- I would suggest Jeremiah was keenly aware that his faithfulness was all that was required of him, which explains why he'd never give up.
- Herein lies our second secret to getting up instead of giving up, namely, as servants and stewards of the Lord, we endure as unto the Lord.

- Perhaps better said, we're able to endure all that comes against us because we know we're doing it for the Lord, and not for anybody else.
- By that I mean, as humble servants and faithful stewards, we will endure hardship for the Lord that we wouldn't put up with for anyone else.
- The truth of the matter is we do things for the Lord that we'd never do for anyone else but the Lord, sometimes not even if it's for ourselves.

- To me, this doing it as unto the Lord was the common denominator between the likes of the Apostle Paul, as well as the Prophet Jeremiah.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the biggest downfalls, pun intended, for us as Christians, this would probably have to be it.
- More specifically, what often times knocks us down and even keeps us down for the count is what I'll call the mindset of the success of self.

- Let me explain, if I do it for self, then the onus is on me to be successful so as to take pride and ownership in that which I've accomplished.
- This is the antithesis of the mindset of a humble servant and faithful steward who instead will do it as unto the Lord, and not as unto man.
- The problem is when it's as unto man, I'll be a man pleaser in order to be successful, instead of being a God pleaser in order to be faithful.

- It's for this reason that the Gospels are replete with Jesus teaching parable after parable contrasting the faithful and the unfaithful steward.
- When called to give an account of what they had been entrusted by the master, being faithful was rewarded, being unfaithful was punished.
- It's interesting to note the reward for the faithful servant was that of being entrusted with even more, sometimes from the unfaithful steward.

Luke 16:10-12 NKJV He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. (11) Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? (12) And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?

Luke 19:20-26 "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' 22"His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 24"Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 25"Sir," they said, "he already has ten!" 26"He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.'

- I find it interesting that the wicked servant has what was entrusted to him completely taken away from him and given to the faithful servant.
- It's also interesting to note that this came at the protest of those in the parable questioning why the master would give it to the one with 10.
- The reason I find this interesting is it wasn't based on the servant being successful or unsuccessful, but on their being faithful or unfaithful.

- We know this because of what the wicked servant offers as his excuse for being unfaithful, and because the master doesn't reap the gain.
- First, the wicked servant says in effect; the master is so powerful he doesn't need to sow more, and the faithful servant is even given more.
- The point being is that the wicked servant had the mindset of the success of self as evidenced by his fear of failure being the excuse given.

- Here's the bottom line in closing, my faltering comes vis-à-vis fear of failing, whereas my rewarding comes vis-à-vis my faithful stewardship.
- In other words, knowing that my reward is not based on my success or failure, which creates fear, I will be propelled by faith, to be faithful.
- Lastly, I would suggest that our faithful stewardship will be directly proportionate to our understanding of this one simple principle of reward.